

I strongly support the reauthorization of Amtrak. H.R. 6003 authorizes \$14.4 billion over five years and is Amtrak's first full reauthorization since 1997. The bill includes \$4.2 billion for capital grants, \$3 billion for operations, and \$1.75 billion over five years for grants for high-speed rail corridors. This marks a major step in the right direction at a time when consumers around the country are struggling with high gasoline prices and limited transportation options.

At the same time, I am sobered by Chairman Oberstar's remarks highlighting a European initiative to spend \$350 billion on their rail system. Over the past decade, the United States, by contrast, has barely doled out enough resources to allow Amtrak to limp along. Our nation must invest in our infrastructure if we expect to remain competitive. This bill takes the first steps in that direction. I would support further action to expand and improve intercity passenger service in the United States.

In Oregon, the state transportation department partners with Amtrak to provide service along the Eugene-Portland-Seattle-Vancouver, BC corridor, a federally-designated high speed rail corridor, known as the Cascades line. While Oregon and Washington pay for the Cascades service, Amtrak operates the train, and this arrangement has proven to be a very successful partnership.

Ridership on the Oregon segment of the line, which has two daily roundtrip trains, has nearly quadrupled since it was initiated in 1994, rising to over 130,000 passengers in 2006. Total ridership on the Cascades service rose over 7% last year, reaching 674,000 passengers, making the Northwest high speed rail corridor the seventh most heavily traveled in the country. With gas prices high, ridership on the corridor for the first quarter of 2008 is up 14.4% compared to the first quarter of 2007. This train service is an important part of the region's transportation system on the congested I-5 corridor.

As successful as the Cascades service is, however, reaching its full potential will require additional investments in the rail line to allow Oregon and Amtrak to increase the frequency and reliability of service. The authorization of capital grants for this purpose will provide needed system upgrades and will strengthen this successful partnership.

I am also supportive of Chairman Oberstar's manager's amendment, which allows for grants to

create bike storage on Amtrak trains. Much of the increased ridership in Oregon and around the country is a result of people changing their work commutes to include public transportation. Many commuters, however, still need their bikes to get to and from the train stations, or for transportation at their destination. By equipping our trains with bike storage we offer people more choices and we do so in a way that is efficient, economical, and good for the environment.